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Defendant Pleads Guilty to Computer Fraud on Virginia Commonwealth University Computer Networks and Aggravated Identity Theft

(Richmond, Virginia) – George Nkansah Owusu, a former Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) student, pled guilty today to computer fraud, and to aggravated identity theft, both in violation of federal law. The computer fraud charge carries a maximum penalty of up to five years in jail, a \$250,000 fine, and a three year term of supervised release. The aggravated identity theft charge carries a mandatory penalty of two years in jail, to run consecutively with any jail sentence imposed. The case is set for sentencing before United States District Judge James R. Spencer on January 8, 2006. Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; and Jane P. Murphy, Special Agent in Charge, United States Secret Service, Richmond Filed Office, announced the plea.

In support of his plea, Owusu acknowledged that in early 2005, he surreptitiously installed keylogger software on computers in the VCU library and computers in several VCU biology and chemistry labs. This keylogger software allowed Owusu to obtain the VCU e-mail and online account login IDs and passwords used by other VCU students and staff, along with login information for other websites and e-mail accounts accessed from the computers running the keylogger software. Owusu e-mailed the information obtained with the keylogger software to several e-mail accounts that he controlled and also created a handwritten document detailing the information he had illegally obtained with the keylogger. Owusu used the information obtained with the keylogger software to access several password-protected VCU computer systems and the e-mail accounts of fellow VCU students and staff.

Owusu also acknowledged that in October and November 2005, he accessed the password-protected VCU online class registration system using another student's log-on information, dropped the student from several honors courses, and then enrolled himself in the student's vacant class slots. On several occasions in March and April 2006, using an instructor's log-on information obtained with the keylogger software, Owusu accessed the password-protected VCU online course management system and changed at least four of his grades from

failing to passing scores. A forensic examination of the defendant's computer, seized at the time of his arrest on June 28, 2006, revealed that the defendant had downloaded onto his computer personal photographs from the e-mail account of one female VCU student, and had copied private e-mails sent by several individuals, including the same female student.

The U.S. Secret Service investigated this case. The case is being prosecuted by Brian R. Hood, Assistant United States Attorney, and Thomas Dukes, Trial Attorney with the Department of Justice's Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section.

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